

Message Text

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10

ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1273

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL KADUNA

AMCONSUL IBADAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, NI, IS

SUBJECT: GARBA HOLDS FORTH

REF: LAGOS 6919 (NOTAL) AND LAGOS 9186 (NOTAL)

1. SEPTEMBER 18 NIGERIAN PRESS CARRIES SEVERAL STORIES COVERING VARIETY REMARKS MADE TO NEWSMEN BY EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER, GOL. JOE GARBA, AT HEATHROW AND IKEJA AIRPORTS ON RETURN FROM HIS GENEVA BRIEFING NIGERIAN AMBASSADORS IN EUROPE. FOLLOWING ARE, INTER ALIA, TOPICS TOUCHED ON.

2. FOREIGN AFFAIRS. ANSWERING REPORTERS' QUESTIONS AT HEATHROW, GARBA REPORTEDLY COMPLIMENTED GOWON REGIME'S FOREIGN POLICY BUT INDICATED PRESENT FMG DISAGREES WITH CERTAIN ASPECTS OF IT. GARBA DID NOT SPECIFY WHAT THOSE AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT ARE, STATING ONLY THAT NEW POLICIES WILL EVOLVE WHEN FMG HAS STUDIED SITUATION FURTHER. IN GENERAL, NIGERIA WOULD MAINTAIN POLICY OF NEUTRALITY, FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION. ON ARRIVAL LAGOS, COMMISSIONER GARBA TERMED MEETING WITH NIGERIAN AMBASSADORS IN GENEVA AS "VERY SUCCESSFUL" AND SAID

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THAT HE HAD ALLEYED FEARS ABOUT SITUATION IN NIGERI. GARBA

NOTED THAT HE HAD REVIEWED OPERATIONS HIGH COMMISSION LONDON AND THAT OFFICE SOON WOULD BE REORGANIZED. (GARBA COMMENTS ON MIDDLE EAST REPORTED LAGOS 9186, BEING REPEATED TEL AVIV).

3. GOWON. GARBA SAID, AT HEATHROW, THERE NO QUESTIONS GOWON BEING EXILED AND THAT "WHENEVER THE SITUATION IS RIGHT FOR HIM TO "COME BACK, WE WILL ASK HIM TO." (ACCORDING TO PRESS, GOWON REPORTEDLY ENROLLED WARWICK UNIVERSITY POLITICAL SCIENCE DEGREE COURSE). REFERRING TO STORIES THAT GOWON HAD SALTED AWAY NAIRA 70-200 MILLION IN FOREIGN ACCOUNTS, GARBA SAID NEITHER RUMOR NOR EVIDENCE OF SUCH HAD COME TO FMG'S NOTICE.

4. PASSPORTS. SPEAKING IN LAGOS ON HIS PRESENT DRIVE TO REORGANIZE THE PASSPORT OFFICE, GARBA ANNOUNCED THAT PASSPORT OFFICE FUNCTIONS WOULD BE DECENTRALIZED AND THAT INDIVIDUAL STATE WOULD NOW BE ABLE ISSUE PASSPORTS. FMG ALSO REVIEWING PRESENT PROCEDURE REQUIRING NAIRA 300 DEPOSIT OF ALL NIGERIAN STUDENT APPLICATIONS.

5. MEIR AMIT VISIT IMBROGLIO. RESPONDING TO QUERY IN LAGOS, GARBA SAID THAT MYSTERY SURROUNDING VISIT AND FACT THAT ONE OF STATES COULD YHOST SUCH DUBIOUS MAN WITHOUT GETTING FEDERAL

GOVERNMENT SECURITY CLEARANCE WAS CLEAR EVIDENCE INEFFECTIVENESS GOWON REGIME. ASSURED NEWSMEN SUCH WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED REOCCUR. (NOTE: VISIT OF ISRAELI EX-INTELLIGENCE CHIEF TO MID- WESTERN STATE THIS PAST JULY CAUSED GOWON FMG GREAT EMBARRASSMENT -- SEE LAGOS 6919.).

6.COMMENT: GARBA'S REMARKS GIVE NO RELAY CLUE TO WHAT, IF ANY, ALTERATIONS THERE WILL BE IN FMG FOREIGN POLICY. WOULD APPEAR FMG FINDING IT DIFFICULTY DEVELOP POLICIES WHICH WOULD DISTINGUISH IT FROM GOWON'S GENERALLY SUCCESSFUL FOREIGN AFFAIRS STANCE. TO DATE, FOREIGN MINISTRY CHANGES HAVE BEEN ADMINISTRATIVE/ORGANIZATIONAL RATHER THAN SUBSTANTIVE.

7. GARBA HAS BEEN RELATIVELY SECLUDED SINCE HE BECAME MEA COMMISSIONER WITH ADVENT NEW FMG AND UNTIL NOW HAS NOT HELD ANYTHING RESEMBLING PRESS CONFERENCE NOR ADDRESSED PUBLIC MEETING.

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